

# Black Bear Damage and Nuisance Complaints 2005

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## **Abstract**

Wildlife Services (WS) personnel received 1,003 bear complaints during calendar year 2005, and trapped and translocated 482 bears. The majority of complaints were resolved over the phone with advice and recommendations from a nuisance wildlife specialist located at the Rhinelander and Waupun District Offices. Complaints requiring field investigation or trapping were dispatched to the field. Bears captured were translocated to an isolated area.

## **Methods**

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services took over Wisconsin's bear damage/nuisance abatement work in 1990. WS specialists are located in Brule, Hayward, Rhinelander, Cumberland, Park Falls, Winter, and Florence and are supervised by Bob Willging (WS District Supervisor, Rhinelander District). WS Specialists supervised by Charles Lovell (WS District Supervisor, Waupun) handled complaints that occurred in the WS Southern District based in Waupun. Two full-time nuisance wildlife specialist handled complaints coming in on the Rhinelander and Waupun District's 800 number.

A nuisance bear was defined as any bear causing problems at bird feeders, garbage cans, dumpsters, and/or campgrounds. Damage bears were defined as bears causing problems to agricultural crops, beehives, livestock, or property (e.g. house siding). Every effort was made to handle bear damage/nuisance complaints over the phone with advice and recommendations. When necessary, the nuisance specialist dispatched calls to field personnel for further investigation and/or live-trapping and translocation.

## **Results**

Calendar year 2005 marked the fifteenth year that WS has assisted WDNR with bear damage/nuisance abatement. Bear complaints in 2005 (1,003) were down 18% from 2004 (1,227), and 30% less than the record number of complaints (1,439) received in 1995. The majority of the complaints (78%) were nuisance complaints, 7% involved property damage, and 15% involved damage to agriculture.

WS personnel live-trapped and translocated 482 bears during 2005 (Table 1). Almost half (49%) of the bears trapped and translocated were involved in agriculture damage situations, although these accounted for only 15% of the total complaints. As in previous years, bears seemed to congregate at certain corn fields requiring the removal of several bears from a single field in order to reduce damage.

A total of 202 bears were trapped and moved from nuisance situations, and 41 from property damage complaint situations. Bear traps were set in 29% of nuisance complaint situations, while 71% were handled with advice and recommendations. The 800# phone system for handling complaints again proved invaluable as nearly all of the nuisance complaints came in on the toll-free lines.

Eight Agricultural Damage Bear Permits were issued in 2005. Four bears were killed under these permits, all in Florence County. The agreement between the WDNR and WS for handling bears complaints continued to work extremely well.

**Table 1.** *Number of black bears trapped and translocated by county and type, 2005.*

<b>County</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Nuisance</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ashland	23	8	9	40
Barron	0	0	2	2
Bayfield	26	3	42	71
Burnett	5	0	8	13
Chippewa	0	0	1	1
Clark	0	1	1	2
Douglas	1	1	15	17
Eau Claire	0	0	1	1
Florence	51	0	13	64
Forest	8	0	3	11
Iron	1	0	4	5
Langlade	9	0	1	10
Lincoln	6	0	13	19
Marathon	0	0	1	1
Marinette	0	1	10	11
Milwaukee	0	0	1	1
Oconto	0	0	8	8
Oneida	3	0	9	12
Polk	0	1	1	2
Price	6	4	9	19
Rusk	15	4	9	28
Sawyer	80	12	30	122
Taylor	1	1	0	2
Vilas	0	4	7	11
Washburn	4	1	4	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>482</b>